

Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers June 6, 2005

NETS Feature

On June 1st all of our Michigan NETS members should have received an e-mail regarding the Michigan NETS Traffic Safety Symposium scheduled to take place on August 17, 2005. The Symposium will take place at Steelcase Town Hall located in Grand Rapids. The Symposium will have nationally recognized speakers present on topics including: Risk Assessment and Negligent Entrustment; Defensive Driving Training Opportunities; Fleet Safety; Automotive Technologies and resources to enable you to implement traffic safety programs in your workplace. Internationally known, Dr. Jim Reese, will present the key note address on learning the necessary skills to overcome the effects of stress. On-line information including a registration form to attend this Symposium will be available at the NETS website soon, www.michigan.gov/michnets. In the meantime, feel free to contact Dan Vartanian at (517) 333-5322 or e-mail: vartanid@michigan.gov for additional information.

Latest Traffic Safety News

GM's OnStar To Remind Motorists To Buckle Up

In support of the national "Click It or Ticket" mobilization, OnStar advisors will remind tens of thousands of motorists to buckle up when they use OnStar services. Between May 23 and June 5, advisors will end calls with a short message reminding the 3 million OnStar subscribers to buckle up every time, every trip. Read the release at <http://media.gm.com/>

Study: Change From Secondary to Primary Belt Laws Could Save Lives

Most seat belt use laws originally passed in the United States contained language restricting enforcement to drivers already stopped for some other reason. States that have since removed this secondary enforcement restriction have reported increased seat belt use. Now, a new study concludes that if the remaining secondary laws were amended, an estimated 696 deaths per year could be prevented.

Source: Journal of Safety Research, Authors: C.M. Farmer and A.F. Williams

Sleep Foundation Targets Drowsy Driving During Holiday Weekend

In recognition of the drivers who hit the road during Memorial Day weekend, the National Sleep Foundation (NSF) launched a national campaign to prevent drowsy driving. According to the Foundation, too often people work all day, pack their cars, get food and fuel, and then hit the road without considering just how little sleep they have gotten and how low their reserves are for staying alert and awake behind the wheel. NSF's 2005 "Sleep In America" poll found that more than 60 percent of respondents admitted to driving when they were drowsy, and more than 10 admitted to having fallen asleep at the wheel at least once a month. For more information visit <http://www.sleepfoundation.org/hottopics/index.php?secid=10>

Senate Passes Roads, Transit Measure

The U.S. Senate passed a \$295 billion, six-year highway and transportation measure, despite the threat of a presidential veto. The Senate version of the bill is \$11 billion more than the \$284 billion approved by the House in March. Senate lawmakers contend the measure is essential to easing traffic congestion and improving safety. Should the House-Senate conference committee come up with a

compromise, it would end 20 months of gridlock that began when the last highway funding law expired in September 2003. Since then, six continuing resolutions have been passed by Congress to keep funding going. Read the full article at <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/05/18/politics/18roads.html>

The Future Of Telematics Questionable

In the mid-1990s, the introduction of sophisticated technologies—backseat videos, navigational systems, etc.—were expected to revolutionize the auto industry. However, some analysts and executives are predicting that the market for telematics won't be as big as expected. According to new research, costs may inhibit development of new telematics, the vehicle itself may not be critical to every application of these devices, and regulation may limit some applications. Read the full article at http://www.mckinseyquarterly.com/article_page.aspx?ar=1180&L2=2

New Technology To Prevent Rollovers

It is estimated that more than 10,000 people die each year in rollover crashes. However, a new device could reduce rollover risks. The Rollover Sensor is a device that constantly monitors a vehicle's balance and the angles as the vehicle turns. When the device senses that a rollover is imminent, it activates pretension seat belts that tighten and hold passengers before the vehicle rolls. The device is not expected to become standard equipment until more research is conducted. Read the full article at <http://www.thewbalchannel.com/news/4472754/detail.html>

Device Seeks To Put Dashboard Info On Windshields

With the market shift toward smaller, high-quality technological devices, some technology companies are hoping to attract the attention of automakers. Microvision Inc. is developing a heads-up display system for windshields. Using the company's core technology, the product would beam speed, tire pressure, map directions, and a global positioning system onto a small portion of the windshield. The company says this method of delivering information is safer than the driver constantly looking down at a dashboard and possibly becoming distracted. Read the full article at http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/business/223897_microvision12.html

When You Dial 9-1-1 On Your Cell Phone, Can Help Find You?

With the explosive growth of wireless technology, more than a third of the 190 million calls placed to 9-1-1 each year now come from cell phones. However, more than half of the United States still lacks the technology to find cell phone callers in distress. Several high-profile cases demonstrate the need for the technology. In 1993, an eighteen year old girl was brutally murdered as she was unable to give her exact location to a dispatcher she had called on her cell phone. Now twelve years later, as some of the nation's biggest cellular carriers face a December deadline to upgrade their systems for 9-1-1 calls, many emergency-call centers won't be able to receive the data. While virtually all of the nation's 6,000 call centers can locate landline phones, only 41 percent of them can locate cell phones. Read the full article at <http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/05132/503395.stm>

Event Data Recorders Capture Crash Data, Controversy

Capable of recording mechanical and human performance before and during a motor vehicle crash, event data recorders (EDRs) or 'black boxes' have attracted the attention of safety and privacy advocates. EDRs can store vehicle speed, air bag deployment, seat belt use, and the state of the brakes. Data gathered by EDRs can help evaluate and improve vehicle performance, expedite crash investigations, as well as identify and report unsafe driving behaviors. Perhaps most noteworthy to vehicle owners, EDRs can serve as electronic witnesses in a court of law—whether for or against the driver. Read the full article at <http://www.edn.com/article/CA529380.html?industryid=2815>

Is Driver Courtesy Losing Speed?

Do you wave 'Thank You' when another driver lets you in? For years and across many borders, drivers have shown their gratitude to fellow motorists who have extended a roadway courtesy by extending the universally-accepted Thank-You-Wave. But is this fundamental mode of polite communication between drivers becoming extinct? Let's hope not. According to some traffic safety experts, the Thank-You-Wave can affect psychological well-being and traffic safety. Read the full article at <http://www.northjersey.com/page.php?qstr=eXJpcnk3ZjczN2Y3dnFIZUVFeXkyNDEmZmdiZWw3Zjd2cWVIRUV5eTY2OTI0ODgmeXJpcnk3ZjcxN2Y3dnFIZUVFeXkz>

Chicago Bans Hand-Held Cell Phone Use While Driving

City Council members in Chicago recently approved a measure banning motorists from using hand-held cell phones while driving. The ban will begin this summer and sets fines of \$50 and up for violators. Drivers will be required to use hands-free devices unless they are making 9-1-1 emergency calls or are talking while the vehicle is parked. The move follows similar bans enacted by cities and states around the country, including New York, New Jersey, and Washington, D.C. Read the full article at http://www.chicagoist.com/archives/2005/05/11/city_council_passes_driver_cell_phone_ban.php

Petition To Install Fire Extinguishers On Pickups, SUVs, Vans Rejected

New pickup trucks, sport utility vehicles, and vans will not be required to have portable fire extinguishers, despite a recent petition to do so by the Fire Equipment Manufacturer's Association. According to NHTSA, the new regulation could increase injuries or fatalities because many motorists lack training in using the devices. The equipment is currently mandated on large trucks and buses used in interstate commerce. The Manufacturers claimed that having the equipment would prevent smaller fires in vehicles from becoming larger ones, and would prevent deaths and injuries. Read the full article at <http://www.detnews.com/2005/autosinsider/0505/08/autos-174068.htm>

Ford First Automaker To Warn Of Aging Tires

Ford Motor Co. has become the first U.S. automaker to warn customers that they should replace older tires, even if the treads aren't worn out. The move comes in response to a growing body of research that suggests tires deteriorate as they age and can experience tread separations and other failures, even if they look strong. Ford's new tire warning is posted on the company's website at www.ford.com, and will be printed in owner's manuals beginning with 2006 model year vehicles.

Vehicle Sales Sticker May Get Safety Make-Over

Car shoppers may soon be able to look at the sticker on vehicle's window to find out how well it avoids a rollover and performs in a crash. The proposal, known as "Stars on Cars," would require automakers to include crash-test results on the sticker along with the manufacturer's suggested retail price and EPA fuel economy. The "star" ratings are based on NHTSA's crash tests. The new requirement is expected to make crash test ratings and vehicle safety a priority for consumers. Read the full article at <http://www.detnews.com/2005/autosinsider/0505/13/C01-180884.htm>

Video Footage Helps Reduce Violations Associated With School Buses

According to a new study, entitled "The Relative Risks of School Travel: A National Perspective and Guidance for Local Community Risk Assessment," the nation experiences an average of 20 school bus-related fatalities per year. One-third of these fatalities occur when motorists illegally pass a stopped school bus, ignoring the flashing red-warning lights and stop sign arm. A study in North Carolina used external bus-mounted video cameras that captured vehicles illegally passing the stopped bus during the loading and unloading of school children. Using the video footage, increasing enforcement, school bus driver training, and a public awareness campaign, one county was able to reduce stop arm violations from 22.6 a day to 7.6—a 67 percent reduction. For more information visit <http://trb.org/publications/trnews/trnews237rpo.pdf>

Committee Discusses National Tire Efficiency Study

The Transportation Research Board's Committee on National Tire Efficiency recently held its second meeting to discuss the pending study and current literature on tire efficiency. Among the topics addressed, the members of the committee discussed tire and tread safety, as well as costs relative to the consumer. The study is being sponsored by NHTSA and is expected to be completed by early 2006. For more information visit <http://www4.nas.edu/webcr.nsf/ProjectScopeDisplay/SAIS-P-04-03-A?OpenDocument>

News from USDOT

Crash Test, Rollover Ratings For 2005 Passenger Cars Now Available

NHTSA recently released crash test and rollover ratings for passenger cars for the 2005 model year. To view the results and for information visit <http://www.dot.gov/affairs/nhtsa1105.htm>

National "Click It or Ticket" Emphasizes Pickup Truck Occupants

According to NHTSA, 70 percent of occupants killed in pickup truck crashes in 2003 were not wearing seat belts compared to 50 percent for cars. Amid the release of this new data, NHTSA will launch the 2005 "Click It or Ticket" seat belt enforcement mobilization. The two-week program is supported by more than \$26 million in national and state ads and targets pickup occupants, as well as drivers in passenger vehicles. For more information visit <http://www.buckleupamerica.org/nmay05/nmay05.php>

Work-Life:

Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) Research Underscores Need for Nighttime, Passenger Restrictions and Extended Supervised Driving Practice

A second round of research on graduated driver licensing (GDL) underscores the need for nighttime and passenger restrictions and for extended supervised driving practice. The research briefly summarizes the research and progress since January 2004, focusing especially on teen driver risk factors, GDL program evaluations, the role of parents, and driver education.

Source: Journal of Safety Research, Authors: J. Hedlund and R. Compton

International Traffic Safety News:

CAA Releases Public Opinions On Roads, Highways

The Canadian Automobile Association (CAA) released the results of its 2005 national public opinion survey on roads and highways. According to the CAA, 46 percent of Canadians indicated that the condition of their roads and highways has become much worse over the past year. The report also found that three out of four Canadians want the government to spend more on road and highway systems to make them safer. For more information visit <http://www2.ccnmatthews.com/scripts/ccn-release.pl/?2005/05/03/0503033n.html?cp=caaNew>

Upgrading Road Markings Can Improve Road Safety

According to a European company, glass beads used in road markings play a key role in improving traffic safety. The company's manager says that at night, glass beads provide retro-reflectivity, enabling the markings to be seen by the driver, and therefore improve road safety. In addition, during day and evening hours, glass beads provide a safer level of skid resistance. Read the full article at <http://www.worldhighways.com/Features/article.cfm?recordID=1751>

'Road Ragers' Are Sought For New Television Series

Company car drivers who experience bouts of road rage are being sought out for a new television documentary series scheduled to appear on BBC1. The series will take place over a course of two weeks and will involve an intense counseling program with a professional psychologist. Experimenting with a variety of therapies, participants will work out the best way to reform and control their rage.

Survey: Smaller Fleets Fail On Safety Checks

According to a new UK survey, small fleets are failing to perform the most basic of safety checks on their drivers. The survey of 1,300 companies with fleet sizes above five vehicles found that 42 percent of respondents had no road safety policy in place. The company behind the survey suggests that schools, colleges and small businesses are among the worst offenders when it comes to neglecting even the most basic checks.

New UK Minister Calls Speeding Tickets 'Silly Lapses Of Judgment'

The UK minister responsible for road safety was almost banned from driving after collecting three speeding tickets. The newly assigned Minister of State for Transport, tasked with road, fuel, vehicle, and safety policies, revealed the speeding tickets he has accrued since 2002 and called them 'silly lapses of judgment.'

Canadian Groups Launch Video To Prevent Impaired Driving

The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Toronto Police Service, and Mothers Against Drunk Driving: Canada have joined forces to produce and distribute a video that chronicles the story of 14 friends who, while returning from a party to celebrate the end of the school year, were involved in a multi-vehicle crash. The video is targeted at high school students and can be viewed from the web. For more information visit

<http://www.madd.ca/english/news/pr/p05may17.htm>

Fleets Urged To Prepare For Corporate Manslaughter Bill

UK fleets may have up to a year and a half to prepare for the new Corporate Manslaughter Bill, according to some industry experts. Despite the new 'timeline,' fleets are being urged to ensure that they meet their new duty of obligations to drivers immediately, especially since police are now keeping official records of work-related crashes. The new legislation aims to make it easier to prosecute companies following fatal traffic crashes.

Proposed Legislation Targets Cell Phones, Gives Leeway On Speeding

Drivers in the UK caught using cell phones illegally while driving, face three penalty points on their licenses and the courts will have the power to disqualify drivers for the offence under proposed legislation. Meanwhile, recognizing the impact of speed cameras on the number of speeding offences, instead of a three-point penalty for speeding, penalties will range from two to six points.

Survey Reveals Shocking Drinking And Driving Patterns

A new survey in the UK revealed that more than seven million Britons could be regularly driving under the influence of alcohol. According to the survey results, a quarter of drivers admit to getting behind the wheel of their vehicles after drinking more than the legal limit. Still, the survey states that 12 percent of respondents consider themselves to be safe drivers.